

RADIATION ONCOLOGY PHYSICIAN GROUPS UNITE TO ENSURE PATIENT ACCESS TO CANCER CARE

The largest professional societies representing radiation oncology physicians in the United States announced on January 9th a partnership with the goal of reforming radiation oncology Medicare payments to expand and enhance access to high quality care for people with cancer. Leaders of the American College of Radiation Oncology (ACRO), the American College of Radiology (ACR), the American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) and the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) stressed the need for a unified approach to create meaningful change on this critical issue.

Medicare payments for radiation therapy services have been cut by 23% since 2013, threatening patient access to cancer care in communities across the country, with further cuts likely in coming years. ACRO, ACR, ASTRO and ASCO are committed to working together to ensure that cost effective, high value cancer care services are available for Medicare beneficiaries and all patients, while positioning the specialty for innovative breakthroughs in cancer treatment for future generations. The organizations' leaders believe that payment reform is an essential path forward for the future of the specialty. Broad Congressional interest in radiation oncology and Medicare physician payment reform provide a robust backdrop for potentially transformative action this year.

ASTRO's Radiation Oncology Case Rate program (ROCR) seeks to address inadequacies of the current payment system. The societies are seeking input from their members and other stakeholders on payment reform, as they ask policymakers to address the urgent threat facing cancer treatment access. They are committed to supporting radiation oncology professionals, both in hospital and freestanding office settings, to secure fair, stable reimbursement. Payment reform in radiation oncology also must address disparities faced by patients in rural and underserved communities.

The groups' leaders expressed confidence that their partnership will ensure continued access close to home to compassionate, technologically advanced, life-saving treatments for patients diagnosed with cancer. They also expressed a commitment to this important advocacy initiative to protect and enhance access to radiation therapy services for patients today and tomorrow.